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SUBJECT: 'AMBITIOUS WORKAHOLIC' KOZHEMYAKO TAKES OVER IN AMURSKAYA  
OBLAST

REF: VLADIVOSTOK 042

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#### Summary

1. The Amurskaya Oblast Duma approved Oleg Kozhemyako as new governor of the region on October 20. He replaces unpopular Governor Nikolay Kolesov, whom the Kremlin forced to resign after allegations of corruption and mismanagement. Kozhemyako is a popular figure known for his crisis-management skills when Governor of Koryak Okrug.

'Ambitious Workaholic' Kozhemyako Replaces Scandal-Plagued Kolesov

2. On October 16, President Dmitriy Medvedev presented the Amur Oblast Duma with his nomination of Oleg Kozhemyako for Governor of the region. Four days later, 21 of the thirty Duma members present -- including all Yedinaya Rossiya representatives -- voted to approve Kozhemyako for the position. Amur residents view Kozhemyako as a welcome replacement to the largely unpopular former governor Nikolay Kolesov, who was forced to resign by the Kremlin because of allegations of official corruption and mismanagement. Upon assuming the governorship, Kozhemyako quickly appointed Viktor Kapkanschchikov, who served as head of the RFE Emergency Response Committee from 2005 to 2007, as First Vice Governor and Deputy Chairman of the Oblast Government. Kozhemyako indicated that, unlike most governors, he does not plan to make large-scale changes to the existing administration.

3. The Kremlin had reportedly been dissatisfied with Kolesov's performance for a while. A Kommersant journalist told Consulate staff that a member of the Presidential Administration characterized the decision to dismiss Kolesov as being "related to numerous scandals involving the governor himself and members of his team." Polpred Oleg Safonov succinctly summarized the upcoming challenges for Kozhemyako thus: "Amurskaya oblast is a depressed and heavily subsidized region. The oblast's economic situation is among of the worst in the Federation. Residents have lost confidence in the regional authorities."

4. Kozhemyako proved to be a strong and popular leader in Koryak Okrug when he successfully dealt with a 2005 winter heating oil shortage there. When President Putin suddenly dismissed Koryak Governor Vladimir Loginov, then-Vice-Governor Kozhemyako assumed the Acting Governor role and successfully procured assistance from federal authorities to avoid a large scale winter crisis. His management skills gained him notice from residents of neighboring Kamchatka, who pressed for him to serve as governor there. He was unable to garner support from Moscow, which supported Aleksey Kuzmitskiy for the position instead.

15. Originally from Primorskiy Kray, Kozhemyako rose to prominence in the seafood industry. His growing business proved to be a threat to Primorye Governor Sergey Darkin and then-Vladivostok Mayor Vladimir Nikolayev, who owned the two largest fishing fleets in Primorskiy Kray. Kozhemyako eventually moved his business to Kamchatka due to increased pressure from authorities, reportedly directed by Governor Darkin who viewed him not only as a business rival, as a strong potential political contender. Though he reportedly had some ties to organized crime during his Primorye fishing company days, most residents consider Kozhemyako relatively clean, writing off criminal connections as a necessary and unavoidable function of doing business in 1990's Russia. Former Koryak Oblast Duma Chair Nina Solodyakova characterized Kozhemyako to the press as "a representative of the new generation of leaders: he's an ambitious and knowledgeable workaholic hungry for recognition."

Biographic Summary: Oleg Nikolayevich Kozhemyako  
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Kozhemyako was born on March 17, 1962, in Chernigovka, Primorskiy Kray. He graduated from Khabarovsk Construction Engineering School in 1982 and received a degree in economics from the Far Eastern State Academy of Economics and Administration in 1992. He is married, and has one son and a daughter.

1989 -- Established and ran food processing company.  
1995 -- Became Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of Preobrazhenskaya Fishing Company.  
1998 -- Elected Chairman of Preobrazhenskaya Fishing Company Board of Directors.  
2001 -- Elected Deputy of Primorskiy Kray Duma.  
2002 -- Elected Primorskiy Kray Senator to the Federation Council.  
2004 -- Resigned as Senator, ran for Kamchatka Governor. Came

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in third.  
2005 -- Appointed Koryakskiy Autonomous Okrug Vice-Governor, responsible for housing and utilities infrastructure.  
2005 -- Appointed Okrug Governor by President Putin.  
2007 -- Lost governorship as a result of Okrug's merger with Kamchatka Oblast, then hired as Presidential Administration aide.  
October, 2008 -- Appointed Governor of Amurskaya Oblast  
GERSTEN